

Education, Training, Youth

The legal basis of the Education, Training and Youth policy are Articles 149 to 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

The opportunities which the EU offers its citizens for living, studying and working in other countries make a major contribution to cross-cultural understanding, personal development and the realisation of the EU's full economic potential. Many of the EU programmes for education and training are open to people of all ages in recognition of the fact that learning is a lifelong process in a knowledge-based world. The EU also promotes educational cooperation and exchanges with some 40 countries around the world, from Mongolia to Mexico and from Algeria to Australia..

The EU provides some €75m a year to support young people who want to do voluntary work, run projects to help local communities or take part in study programmes not covered by other programmes. The objectives to which the EU is working for 2010 are that:

- » at least 85% of 22-year olds should have completed upper secondary education;

- » no more than 10% of those aged 18-24 should have left school before completing upper secondary education or vocational or other training;

- » the total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology should have increased by 15% while the gender imbalance should decrease;

- » the percentage of 15-year olds with low achievement in reading literacy should have decreased by at least 20% compared to 2000 levels;

- » the average level of participation in lifelong learning of those aged 25 to 64 should be at least 12.5%.

The EU is promoting convergence and comparable qualifications in higher education, for example, through coordinated reforms, compatible systems and common action. With 15 other countries, it has agreed to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010, working through the so-called Bologna process.

A parallel 'Copenhagen process' in which 32 countries participate promotes cooperation in the reform and development of vocational education and training systems. Work is under way via this process to implement a European educational credit transfer system and to facilitate mutual recognition and the transferability of vocational qualifications.